

These Things - What Are They?

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[0 : 00] We can turn back to a reading in 2 Peter chapter 1. I want us to read from verse 8 to verse 15 just now.

! 2 Peter chapter 1 at verse 8.! For whoever lacks these qualities is so short-sighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.

Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure. For if you practice these qualities, you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Therefore, I intend always to remind you of these qualities. Though you know them and are established in the truth that you have, I think it is right that as long as I am in this body to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me.

And I will make every effort so that after my departure, you may be able at any time to recall these things. There's a phrase, as you're reading through verse 8 to verse 10, a couple of words that come together very often there, and it's these things, these qualities.

[1 : 39] It's Peter repeating that again and again in a very powerful way. And he says there in verse 12, Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities.

So he's saying there's something very important here for us to draw attention to, and to think to ourselves, well, what are these things, what are these qualities that he's talking about that are so important, and why are they so important for us?

Who of us would want to be known as a failure in the Christian life? Who of us would want to have that marred against us, that this person failed in their Christian life?

It's a stupid question for us, because none of us would say that we want to be known as failures in the Christian life. Every one of us wants, I hope, to seek to be the best Christian that we can be by the grace of God.

But yet you have in Peter himself one who at one point was seen as having failed the Lord Jesus Christ. When you look in his own life, a life that, as you read here, seems to be coming to an end.

[2 : 53] He's in the latter stages of his life. In verse 14 he makes that clear for us, Since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon.

There's this knowledge he has that his life is drawing to a close. But yet he has learned so much in his life. And many would probably remember him as a failure in some ways.

And especially because the night that the Lord Jesus was crucified, he denied him three times. And yet Peter, impulsive Peter as he often was, he learned so much through that experience.

And especially seeing the grace of the Lord Jesus in restoring him, in speaking to him in a very powerful way to remind him that he was still one who loved the Lord and who served the Lord throughout the rest of his days as well.

So you could look at Peter's life and see there were failings in it. But by the grace of God, he was restored and kept going from strength to strength.

[3 : 59] But how did he do it? We live in a world that offers so much advice. And there are books upon books written about how to be a better person.

Some of them are even written from a Christian perspective. And you see the titles of them and you think, well, what is that really going to tell to me? Titles such as Think Better, Live Better, Become a Better You, You Can, You Will.

And so they go on. There's these titles of books that try and catch your attention and think, well, how can I be a better person? And so many of them are focused on ourselves.

Self-help topics. But the reality is we cannot help ourselves. And that's when we see the greatest book ever written before us this evening, the Word of God.

God has given us his Word. As we read in this chapter, we are reminded that it is the Word of God. In verse 21, For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

[5 : 17] God gave us his Word. The Old and the New Testament, the whole Word of God is our truth to live by. It is where we find the help of God to live as we should.

And as you think back to the shorter catechism, they were right when they wrote, The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify him and enjoy him.

The Word of God is the only rule that we need to glorify and enjoy him. And so we have this truth before us.

And it's this truth that helps us, that guards us as we go along. And so, how can we apply this truth to ourselves?

Well, that is what Peter is doing here as he's writing to these Christians long ago. He's writing to people who were believers, who had trusted the Lord Jesus Christ.

[6 : 22] But he's writing to them to encourage them, reminding them of these things that are so important. Peter here is giving us the secret to a godly life.

The way that we are to live. And when you look at this chapter, there's so many things in it. And you see in verse 10, there's like a hinge on everything there as well.

How it speaks about making your calling an election sure. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling an election sure. For if you practice these qualities, you will never fall. So we're reminded of just how important these qualities, these things are. It's about our calling and our election. That God is calling us.

And that God has chosen his people. It's not saying that we can change God's mind in term of election. We know that God has chosen a people.

[7 : 24] But he's talking here about making or calling an election sure. Not adding anything to that. But living by faith in the whole counsel of God.

The whole word of God. Living by faith, looking to the Lord Jesus Christ. Because it's not just this passive attitude that we have to have.

Well, if we are elect, we are elect. And there's nothing we can do about it. That's not what Peter teaches here in light of making our calling an election sure.

Faith goes together with works. Faith is always active. Should always be active. And we should always be seeking to grow in our faith.

To be growing in our knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Knowledge is something that Peter mentions throughout this letter, the second Peter. This knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[8 : 20] You see it there in verse 3 it is. His divine power is granted to us. All things are pertained to life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us.

So we see there it is about growing in our faith. In the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. And so these things that he is speaking about, it's all about this growing in our knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so immediately we think, well, if Peter is writing these things, if they are there to help us grow in our faith and in our knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, are we willing to listen to them?

Are we willing to receive them? Are we willing to work on our faith in order to grow in this way, in our knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ?

So we see Peter outlined here steps for us to help us to grow as Christians. And as we go through these verses that we have before us, and especially as we look, secondly it's going to be at verse 5 and 6.

[9 : 30] You see a list there of things that are these things. That are these things that are so important. But before we look at the list of these things, I want us first to see what these things lead to.

So we're doing it a little back to front. Verse 8 down to verse 15 makes clear what these things lead to. And then secondly we will see what these things are.

And so there's four things that these things lead to. Four things that these things lead to. And so we're going to look at this first. Four things.

Have you ever been somewhere and you see things differently to somebody else? You think about this time of year when maybe you go round the shows.

The Point show's been on recently. There'll be other shows coming up, different parts of the island. Many people go to all these different shows. And things are put on display. And prizes are handed out in different ways.

[10:37] It may be for animals. It may be sheep or cows or dogs. These kinds of things. You see other prizes being handed out for baking. Other prizes handed out for crafts.

And you may be walking round with someone who knows a lot more about, say, animals than you do. And they're pointing out a sheep and all the different qualities of the sheep in a pen.

And they could maybe pick out that's the one that's likely to win. Because they're seeing qualities in it that the person who has no knowledge just can't see. I would just see a sheep.

Not any qualities in that sheep, but just a sheep. But the trained eye sees things differently. And so it goes on in different ways. When you look at crafts, people will see the intricate details of crafts that the untrained eye just cannot see.

Or the baking, they'll taste something that you just miss. You don't have that trained palate in order to see the difference in that. We see things differently in many different experiences.

[11:42] We see that there are qualities there, but we miss out because we don't understand what they are. But when you look at the qualities that Peter is writing about here, you see that there are qualities that should mark out every Christian.

That you should be able to see the qualities of faith in every Christian. Now, we know that for some, we look at it and we see it more clearly. It's more evident. And others will say the qualities are hidden in different ways.

But everyone should have or be seeking to be growing in these qualities. And that is the gift of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And when we look at the qualities that we see here, we're reminded of just how they would help us in our Christian walk. So what these things lead to first, we see in verse 8, beginning there.

For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[12:54] So there's the first thing that these qualities lead to. Instead of being ineffective or unfruitful in our knowledge of Jesus Christ, we will be growing in our knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We all can have that sense of being unfruitful, but barren and bare in our hearts and in our souls. When we feel that there's that distance with God, when we're not right with God.

But these things, these qualities, are what can bring us closer to God in that sense of being fruitful, of being fruitful in growing in our knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, of being effective in all of these things.

Because the more we know the Lord Jesus Christ, the more we are close to the Lord Jesus Christ, then the more we are going to have that fruit being born in our lives and in our experiences.

And so who wouldn't want to have this guarantee of fruitfulness? And that is what this word of God is pointing, is guiding us towards.

[14:08] Being fruitful and being discerning as well as we see. Secondly, for whoever lacks these qualities is so short-sighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.

So we see there's this lack of spiritual discernment too if we don't have these things, these qualities, we're spiritually blind.

Paul, the apostle, he knew what it was to be blind physically but also spiritually. I was so blind to the love of God.

I was so blind to the grace of God. And yet when the Lord Jesus came into his life, when his eyes were opened, he was amazed that the love that he would show to a sinner such as him.

And these things are what would have helped Paul as well. And so we see here it is these gifts, these things that are able to help us to discern the love of God.

[15:18] To see the love of God in a more majestic way. That second half of verse 9 as well, these things remind us of the guarantee and the assurance of salvation.

It says, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. How sin attacks us again and again and when we're forgetting these things, it just weighs down on us so heavily.

we lose that sense of assurance that comes through faith, of the love of God, that our sins are forgiven through him.

So we have this lack of assurance that can so easily come into our hearts. And then as you go into verse 10, you see the fourth thing there.

These things give a guarantee to us. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure. For if you practice these qualities, you will never fall.

[16 : 25] It sounds quite a bold statement to make that you will never fall. There is always that fear of falling. But what keeps us from falling? Practice these things.

And that gives us that assurance, that guarantee that we will not fall from the love of God. And so, we have these four things that this leads to.

That we will be fruitful, that we will have spiritual discernment, that we will have assurance in our salvation that we will never fall as a Christian. So if you have these four things outlined to you, who would not want these things?

Who would not want to have comfort in all of these things? And so we ask, well, how do we get that? There must be something quite spectacular for us.

There must be something quite powerful. Maybe it's hard to get these things. It will be out of the reach of many of us. Out of the reach of the ordinary Christian.

[17 : 35] Well, the way Peter is writing here, he is reminding that this is for all. This is for everyone who comes to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So if we want to have these assurances, what are these things that we need? Well, then we come back to verse 5 and 6.

And here we are told what these things are. what these things are. We've heard what they lead to, but what are these things?

Well, it begins with faith. Faith is the foundation of it all. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith.

So it begins with faith, but it doesn't end with faith. faith. Because faith alone, in order to grow, it needs to be worked.

[18 : 35] Faith needs to be exercised. And so Peter is here saying, supplement, add to your faith in the sense of growing in your knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ by practicing these things.

So faith is the foundation of it all. But then what is added to faith? Well, we see as we look at verse 5, for this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue.

Virtue is the first of these things. What is that? What is virtue? It's moral uprightness. It's holiness. The word literally means excellent living.

And that's the way that Peter is writing to us here. And that's the way God is writing to us. That we are to look for that holiness in our lives at all times.

God said, be holy, for I am holy. And we know we can never reach the holiness of God. He is holiness, but we are to seek to live in that way.

[19 : 48] To know the holiness of God. To know that excellent living. And we all know how we fail so often in that.

When we are falling in so many different ways. But do we let that just grind us down or do we let it encourage us again to rise up and to seek for this holy living?

We are to live by the word of God. We are to live by the promises and the truths that we have in the word of God. We are to live that holy life depending on God.

You think of Psalm 25 and it's really a prayer. Show me thy ways O Lord thy paths O teach thou me. There's this longing to live this life that is right with God.

So add to your faith virtue. It was Dwight Moody who once said a holy life will make the deepest impression. Lighthouses blow no horns.

[20 : 56] They just shine. And so there is what we are to be as Christians. Holy examples to those around us.

Adding to our faith virtue. And then he goes on. Add to your faith virtue and virtue with knowledge.

So the second of these things knowledge and understanding of the truth and how to live it. We can all have an understanding of truth in some way.

But to have knowledge is to add to that virtue of applying it all to our lives. How we can live with that knowledge of God and seeking to understand his word more and more.

Where does the knowledge of God come from? It comes from being in his word. By seeking to indulge in his word day after day to seek that understanding that we find in his word.

[22 : 07] When you go to Psalm 119 that psalm as a whole it speaks about the importance of the word of God in our lives. And at one point in that psalm in verse 67 the psalmist says before I was afflicted I went astray but now I keep your word.

So a lack of understanding a lack of knowledge in the word of God a falling away from the word of God leaves us so often afflicted. But the psalm says no now I keep your word.

Your word is what is guiding me. What is helping me. And so we need that knowledge of the word of God. Do you have that hunger for God's word?

Do you have that desire and longing for God's word day by day that it is the word of God that teaches us how to glorify and how to enjoy him forever?

To seek more of that knowledge of God in his word. And then to knowledge is added self-control.

[23 : 17] And again this is something we always have to work on in our life as well. Faith is the foundation but again and again we are having to exercise our faith in all of these things.

Self-control. So often our lives will go the direction of I'll do as I please. But that is going away from the word of God.

Our lives are not to do as we please but to do as God wills. Psalm 40 speaks of it. To do thy will I take delight.

And it's seeking that delight in God. Otherwise we are seeking delight in ourselves that so often leads us along the wrong path. Self-control is something that we all have to work on.

And we know it only too well how often we have to do it. One writer puts it like this. We have to show self-control on our tongues, our tempers and our temptations.

[24 : 23] These three areas of life where we have to show self-control our tongues, our tempers and our temptations. And we know only too well how easy it is to lose control in all of these things.

In our tongues and how we speak to others or about others we have to show self-control. In our tempers when we start losing control of our temper we have to show self-control to come back to the word of God.

In our temptations we know the Lord's prayer how he says lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. We need to show self-control and so these things they're all building together.

So we have that self-control and then add to self-control steadfastness. Steadfastness this means endurance.

Endurance a faith that endures no matter what goes on around us no matter what we hear that will tempt us away from believing the word of God we endure in all situations because we hear so often those who will cast away God's word how it's false how it's not truth how we don't need it but yet we are to be steadfast even when things are going against God's cause in so many ways we are not to turn and drift with a tide we are to swim against it to endure to go that direction that the Lord is putting us in and to hold fast in the faith again someone describes it as the vine that clings to the tree when the wind is blowing against the vine it's blowing it against the tree so it's held closely to it or when the wind is blowing into its face it's sheltering behind the tree so the wind cannot push it away and it's that way that we are to endure by holding fast close to the

[26 : 38] Lord when the storm is on our back we are being pushed closer to him when the storm is in our face we are sheltering behind him we are there with him always we are showing endurance and remembering the promises of God's word promises like he says in Hebrews 13 5 I will never leave you I will never forsake you we have all these promises that help us to be steadfast and then we add to steadfastness godliness again this word means just walking in light of the greatness of God recognizing who he is added on to holiness as we see the holiness of God we see godliness we walk in light of his greatness everything that we are doing we are to do in the fear of the

Lord and that is wisdom that is wisdom's beginning the fear of the Lord that we are in awe of God that we are living in light of the greatness of God so we have godliness godliness in the sense of everything that we do is for his glory and then godliness we add brotherly affection brotherly love and again we see this how it's closely linked to godliness and holiness when we love the Lord with all our heart we love our neighbor as our self brotherly affection a love for the Lord's people and when you think of that brotherly affection you think of Peter and how much he knew of that brotherly affection when he had denied the Lord

Jesus Christ the Lord didn't reject him he didn't put him away but he showed that brotherly affection in restoring a brother in his faith and bringing him back he had denied him three times and yet he asked him that question Simon Peter do you love me yes Lord you know that I love you was Peter response Peter here he is in the latter stages of his life as he's thinking of brotherly affection you can imagine him almost welling up in tears thinking of the love that Jesus had shown to him and that's the love that he is saying to show to others to show that love to our brothers and sisters in Christ when you know the love of Christ it's a wonderful thing to be able to share it with others so we have brotherly affection and then brotherly affection you add to that love now here it's slightly different he's talking about that self sacrificing love for the

Lord that never ending love for God that exhibits itself in everything that we do the very same love that God has shown to us and when it says when God so loved the world that he gave his only son when we see the sacrificial love of God that is what drives us surely then to grow in our knowledge of him who called us from his own glory who called us to his own glory and excellence as it says there earlier on in verse three we are looking to grow in our knowledge of him of the Lord Jesus Christ by seeing what he has done for us the love of God that did not spare his own son how much do you love the

Lord these things are there for us they seem like you would think they would be very difficult things to grasp to attain to but really when you think of faith faith is in many ways we can over complicate it it's a simple thing to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ but it's a faith that is to grow a faith that is to grow through these things through these things that then give us these comforts and assurance of being fruitful of being discerning of having assurance and of never falling it is these things this list in verse five and six that we are to put into practice are we willing to exercise our faith and how much do we love the

[32 : 14] Lord who loved us and gave himself for us it's good to see so many young people out this evening I want to tell you a little story about a little girl and how she was put to the test a story for us all to consider a mother wanted to put her to the test to teach her a lesson and what she did was as they were going to church one Sunday morning she gave her daughter a five pound note and a one pound coin and she said to the daughter put whichever one you want into the collection plate when it comes round and keep the other one for yourself and she left that with her daughter and they were sitting in church and the collection plate as it was in that church it came round they passed it round and they put into the collection the mother didn't look to see what her daughter did but after the service she asked her well what did you do did you give the five pound or did you give the one pound and the daughter replied well

I was going to give the five pound but then the man in the pulpit said the Lord loves a cheerful giver and I thought to myself will I be much more cheerful if I gave the pound coin and kept the five pound for myself and so that's what she did but what's the lesson to be learned in that for us is life about getting for ourselves is the Lord saying that the less we give to him the more we keep for ourselves the happier we'll be no the Lord is telling us that what's important in life not just for now but for all our days and for all eternity is to recognize that he gave everything for us and that we are to give all for him to find out all these assurances for ourselves we are to practice these things these things that remind us that the most important thing is to believe in the

Lord Jesus Christ and to seek to have more and more knowledge of him and all his promises for this very reason Peter says make every effort to supplement your faith to add these things they're all important it's not faith first and then and then and something you're doing as you're going on in life but it's all together believe and live and work on your faith make your calling an election sure for if you practice these qualities you will never fall there's wonderful promises for us but there's challenges do you believe and are you making your calling an election sure may the Lord help us to do so let us pray Lord our gracious God we thank you that you do indeed exercise our faith and teach us to exercise it too and we pray that you will help us in all of these things that we'll be able to apply them to our own lives and to our experiences help us that we would have that desire to grow in our knowledge of the

Lord Jesus Christ the one who gave his all for us Lord help us we pray and guide us in all of these things as we ask it in Jesus name Amen we're going to conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm 128 in the Sing Psalms version Psalm 128 page 172 we can sing the whole of this Psalm Psalm 128 how blessed are all who fear the Lord who walk the way that he has shown success and blessing will be yours you'll eat the fruit that you have grown and so it goes on we'll sing the whole

of this Psalm to God's praise Amen How blessed are all who fear the Lord who walk the way that he has shown success and blessing blessing will be you'll eat the fruit that you have grown your wine will be a fruitful wine and round your table will be place your children like young olive shoes the sea who fears the Lord is blessed may you be behold to behold you behold
Jesus and good from Zion make God's blessing flow your children's children may receive May God God of Israel peace be shown after the benediction I'll go to the door to my right we'll close with the benediction now may grace mercy and peace from God Father Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forever more Amen Amen
[39 : 16] Thank you.